



Departure and Struggle

We are caught in ego when we are conditioned by compulsions to grasp and hold onto what we falsely imagine will make us happy or keep us happy. We then feel compelled to stay in control of the territory we fought so hard to gain.

To break free from such a tangle involves first of all letting go of the following illusions:

1. I am a solid identity separate from everything else around me. This duality is visible only to ego. As I progress in consciousness, I enjoy another perspective (that of my spiritual Self) which sees only unity and the marriage of apparent opposites.

The duality in ego vision makes me confound seamless reality into either . . . ors, good and bad, I and they. This is the source of adversarial conflict and demands that others change to fit my templates of perfection.

2. Flowing from this dualism is the second illusion: there is something out there that can fulfill my longing and answer my needs, and this something can last forever. The dualism of subject/object has thus led to the Faustian error that some person, place,

thing, belief, etc. can immerse us to the changes and phases that challenge any adult. It imagines bliss to be a commodity that can be gained, lost, found, won, or possessed.

As we take the terrifying risk of letting go of this illusion we recognize that bliss is already and always in us, here and now not there and then. The only mystery is that we go on missing it.

Once we engage with the real people and real circumstances of our own lives, we discover our own inner excitement and "every day the real caress replaces the ghostly lover," as Anaïs Nin wrote in her diary.

3. Our next task is to let go the illusion that we are in control or need to be in control in order to survive. We fear the changes that might happen within and around us. We fear the risk that we might experience or face overwhelming feelings. We fear losing approval and so not surviving—a childhood equation. In fact, all fear is fear of adulthood, fear of confronting realities that we did not design or choose, fear of letting the chips fall where they may. In reality, fear is the display on our emotional screen when we type in "I am or I may be losing control."

We do not let go of control on our own. Usually, something has to happen that shows us incontrovertibly that we are not in control. From this condition of bankrupt ego, we finally let go. Great losses are thus necessary losses like the discarded sandbags that lighten a balloon so it can ascend higher.

4. The final illusion to be let go of is entitlement, the anachronistic belief that as adults we still deserve to be taken care of as we were in infancy. We may falsely believe that everyone is supposed to trust us and treat us with love and respect. We become enraged when we realize that people are not taking our wishes seriously, not acting toward us as if we were special, not loving us unconditionally. We may be applying this to everyone from our intimate partner to the driver who cut us off on the highway.

Please buy David Richo's book, *How to Be an Adult*, if only for these two pages alone! -RS